



**Thriving Children, Families, and Communities:
The Role of Early Childhood Programs**

Monday, September 17, 2018

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Demand for high-quality early childhood education is here—and growing!

It is our pleasure to host today's gathering of leaders from more than 60 communities across the state. We know as you know—that the future of communities is inextricably linked to the well-being of children and families. Communities thrive when children and families thrive.

Today's conference is in response to requests from communities across Nebraska to support their interest and commitment to providing quality care and education for children.

Throughout our time together, we will deepen our understanding of the importance of quality in early care and education settings and learn from those of you who are on the front lines of providing care and education in communities across the state. We will share ideas, challenges encountered, and solutions.

We hope your participation answers your questions, expands your network of resources, and provides guidance on next steps for strengthening quality in early childhood programs and services in your community.

Again, thank you for being here. We look forward to a great day together!

Jessie Rasmussen

Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Sam Meisels

Buffett Early Childhood Institute
University of Nebraska

Becky Veak

First Five Nebraska

John Spatz

Nebraska Association of School Boards

Mary Jo Pankoke

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

Jeff Yost

Nebraska Community Foundation

Chuck Hibberd

Nebraska Extension

Agenda

8:30 a.m. Registration and Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Welcome

Jessie Rasmussen, Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Omaha
Sheryl Feinstein, University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kearney

Remarks

Senator Matt Williams, Nebraska Legislature, District 36

9:15 a.m. Keynote Presentation

High-Quality Early Care and Education: What It Is and What It Takes

Kate Gallagher, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Omaha

We know from brain research that young children need high-quality care and education to do well and to be well as children and into adulthood. But what do we mean by “high quality?” This keynote will address high quality from the perspective of the child, answering the questions, “What does the child need to be well and do well?” and “How can we provide it?” Participants will learn about the many ways adults can provide high-quality care and education for young children.

9:45 a.m. Plenary

Developing and Supporting Nebraska’s Early Childhood Workforce

Marjorie Kostelnik, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Children depend on caring adults for their care and education. Early childhood teachers and child care professionals who provide care and education for groups of young children are essential for raising our next generation of healthy, educated children. To ensure that the early childhood workforce provides the high-quality interactions children need, we must provide education, quality experiences, and environments that care for adults as well as children. In this interactive session, participants will explore how we can plan for and implement policies and practices to support the development of our early childhood workforce.

10:30 a.m. Networking Break and Information Tables

Explore difference-making resources available to children, parents, and providers across the state.

11:00 a.m. Plenary

Redesigning Child Care to Promote Education, Support Families, and Build Communities

Joan Lombardi, Early Opportunities, Washington, D.C.

Michelle Suarez, Prosper Lincoln, Lincoln

Megan Garcia, Public Health Solutions, Crete

Melissa Kelly, Pender Community Hospital, Pender

Quality affordable child care can help address three critical issues: supporting working families, providing enriched environments for children, and developing new employment opportunities for teachers and other caregivers. It is time for action plans that address all three goals. All across the country communities are coming together to help develop quality child care systems. This session will frame the issues and highlight promising community efforts in Nebraska.

11:55 a.m. Lunch and Panel Presentation

Community Champions: Early Childhood Development Spurs People Attraction

Moderator: Jeff Yost, Nebraska Community Foundation, Lincoln

Pam Abbott, Keith County Community Foundation, Ogallala

K.C. Belitz, Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Columbus

Danny Benge, Hometown Market, Red Cloud

Allison Jonas, Gothenburg Public Schools, Gothenburg

In our mobile society, people can often live and work wherever they choose, making people attraction a primary economic development concern. Volunteer leaders from more than 250 Nebraska hometowns are forging better futures by inviting their friends and neighbors to get engaged in the community. Connect with community leaders who are part of the Nebraska Community Foundation network, many of whom are developing early childhood programs as a core part of their people attraction efforts.

1:15 p.m. Workshops

2:30 p.m. Networking Break, Information Tables, and Video Interviews

3:00 p.m. Workshops Repeat

4:15 p.m. Closing

Jeff Yost, Nebraska Community Foundation, Lincoln

4:30 p.m. Networking Reception and Video Interviews

Workshops

The Buck Stops (W)Here! Funding Resources for Quality Programs

Jeff Yost, Nebraska Community Foundation, Lincoln

Gladys Haynes, Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Omaha

Ben Baumfalk, First Five Nebraska, Lincoln

High-quality early childhood programs positively impact children's development. Ensuring the programs remain financially stable, however, can be challenging. Often a program's financial sustainability requires blending and/or braiding funds from numerous sources. This workshop will identify operational costs associated with providing high-quality early childhood care and education services. Potential revenue sources will also be discussed, including partnerships where expenses are shared.

Designing Quality Early Care and Education Environments

Debora Wisneski, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha

Ed Buglewicz, RDG Planning & Design, Omaha

This interactive workshop will explore purposeful connections between quality environments and quality programs, reflecting on the fundamentals of architectural design along with the selection of building finishes, program materials, and furnishings that all add up to quality environments for young children. Whether undertaking renovation, new construction, or a simple remodel, there are lessons learned and guiding principles to consider. The discussion will apply to a range of settings from home-based to center-based programs and identify special considerations for infants, toddlers, and preschool age children, including mixed-age groupings.

Bridging Cultures and Languages for High-Quality Care and Education

Chris Maxwell, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Omaha

Nayeli Lopez, Learning Community Center of South Omaha, Omaha

Janette Merkel, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Omaha

Sarah Ochoa, Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska, Gering

Claudia Zapata, Midlands Latino Community Development Corporation, Omaha

High-quality care and education builds upon the strengths of children, families, and communities, drawing upon home culture and language. This panel highlights culturally affirming approaches to early childhood workforce and program development across community and school settings.

Journey Toward Quality: One Community's Experience

Sally Hansen, The Valley Child Development Center, Red Cloud

Kerra Zambrano, The Valley Child Development Center, Red Cloud

Ashley Wittwer Armstrong, The Valley Child Development Center, Red Cloud

Communities are built on strong families and healthy children. High-quality child care is an essential aspect of community vitality. Children need brain-building care and education, and parents need reliable, quality care to support their work, education, and family well-being. Learn about one Nebraska town, Red Cloud, that put high-quality child care at the center of its community vitality plan. Hear about the adventures, joys, and challenges of creating a high-quality early childhood program and planning for sustainability.

Early Childhood Policy and Systems Development

Becky Veak, First Five Nebraska, Lincoln

Elizabeth Everett, First Five Nebraska, Lincoln

Adam Feser, First Five Nebraska, Lincoln

Learn how state and federal administrative and legislative policy shapes early childhood programming and about the government systems that administer programs. Learn also about an exciting opportunity to develop leadership skills that will help you influence public policy and have your voice heard.

Messaging Effectively About Early Childhood in Your Community

Mike Medwick, First Five Nebraska, Lincoln

Engaging local audiences about the importance of early developmental experiences is essential to the success of your community's early childhood goals. This interactive workshop will focus on framing your message for different audiences, leveraging your communications resources, and other key elements of crafting an effective messaging strategy that influencers and decision-makers will respond to.

Engaging Families: Cultivating and Sustaining Collaborative Partnerships

Portia Kennel, Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Omaha

Tammy Francisco, Educare, Omaha

Maria Jacinto, Parent of Educare student, Omaha

Numerous studies point to the importance of parenting and family engagement in promoting children's school readiness, achievement, and long-term school success. This workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to reflect upon and discuss their own experience as parents, practitioners, and partners in the educational process. Participants will learn strategies for building relationships with families that support reciprocal partnerships with early care and education providers.

Connecting Schools With Community Child Care

Amy Bornemeier, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, Lincoln

Jorja Brazda-Witters, Omaha Public Schools, Omaha

Susan Johnson, Falls City Public Schools, Falls City

Allison Jonas, Gothenburg Public Schools, Gothenburg

Jean Ubbelohde, Millard Public Schools, Millard

Early childhood development spans the years from birth through Grade 3. Learn more from a group of communities where schools and child care programs are working together to benefit young children and their families. A panel of school leaders will share their community approaches, lessons learned, and challenges they encountered.

Keynote Speaker

Kathleen Gallagher

Director of Research and Evaluation, Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Kate Gallagher joined the Buffett Institute in 2018. Her work focuses on developing applied research and evaluation studies involving children from birth – Grade 3, their families, and the early childhood professionals who care for and teach young children. Gallagher began her affiliation with the Buffett Institute in 2016 as the Cille and Ron Williams Community Chair for Early Childhood Education at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. The Williams Chair was the first of four endowed community chairs that the Buffett Institute is working to establish across the University of Nebraska. Gallagher has more than 30 years' experience as an early childhood professional and educational psychologist, including teaching, home visiting, and leading early childhood programs in early intervention and inclusive preschools.

Before coming to Nebraska in 2016, Gallagher spent 13 years at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she taught in the School of Education and served as a research scientist at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Gallagher holds a doctorate in educational psychology and human development from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned a master's degree in educational foundations from Marquette University and a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and special education from Cardinal Stritch University.



Plenary Speaker

Marjorie J. Kostelnik

Senior Associate to the President, University of Nebraska

Marjorie Kostelnik has been involved in developing cross-disciplinary early intervention programs in higher education and the community for more than 35 years. Graduating with a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh, she entered the field as a Head Start teacher before going on to receive her master's and doctoral degrees in early childhood from Penn State.

Kostelnik was on the faculty at Michigan State for 22 years, working with educators in 100 programs/communities inside and outside the U.S. on developmentally appropriate curriculum, enhancing children's school readiness, and helping teachers develop positive guidance strategies. She came to Nebraska in 2000 as dean of the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences. In 2004, Human Resources and Family Sciences combined with Teachers College to become one of the first colleges of Education and Human Sciences in the country.

The author of more than 60 articles/chapters and 18 books, Kostelnik is a member of the Editorial Board for the Journal of Early Childhood Research and Practice and the Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education. Locally, she is chair of the Educare-Lincoln Partners Board (early education, birth to age 5) and during the past two years has served as a co-leader of the Prosper Lincoln early childhood working group and as co-chair of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission, sponsored by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.

Nationally, Kostelnik served as vice president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She is past chair of the Great Plains IDEA Cabinet, a governing group for more than 50 universities focused on providing master's degrees through distance education to students worldwide. Most recently, she served on the National Academies of Science Institute of Medicine Committee to Study the Science of Children Birth to Age 8.



Plenary Speaker

Joan Lombardi

Director, Early Opportunities

Joan Lombardi has made significant contributions in the areas of child and family policy as an innovative leader and policy adviser to national and international organizations and foundations and as a public servant. She currently directs Early Opportunities, L.L.C., a philanthropic advisement service focused on young children and families in the U.S. and around the world. In this role she provides overall advisement to the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and to the Pritzker Children's Initiative, among others. She also serves as the guest editor of Early Childhood Matters, the journal of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. In addition, she is a visiting scholar at the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard University.



Lombardi served in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the first Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development (2009-2011) and as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and External Affairs in Administration for Children and Families and the first Commissioner of the Child Care Bureau, among other positions (1993-1998). She is the author of numerous publications including Time to Care: Redesigning Child Care to Promote Education, Support Families and Build Communities and co-author of Beacon of Hope: The Promise of Early Head Start for America's Youngest Children. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Global Campaign for Education, U.S.

Join the conversation

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